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Dear Mr. Sullivan:

I am writing in response to your letter of March 10, 1981, concerning the tragic disappearance of your son, John, in El Salvador on December 28, 1980. I had asked Jim Ward, Director of our Citizens Emergency Center, to contact you over the weekend to discuss some of the points raised in your letter. I hope that your conversation was a productive one.

As Mr. Ward pointed out, we were a little confused about your statement regarding the Department's taking several days or weeks to make a phone call or send a letter. We agreed in our meeting of February 18, that Ed Martinez of our Citizens Emergency Center would be in telephone contact with your daughter, Mrs. Penna Igue, every day. I understand that this contact has included Saturdays and Sundays, either directly by Mr. Martinez or through the officer on duty in the Emergency Center. I realize that quite often these telephone calls are almost pro forma in that there is simply little to report, but I think it is important that we continue this daily communication so that we will make sure that you do stay informed of the status of John's case. Also, these calls provide you and your family every opportunity to pass information to us.

I want to assure you that the recent meeting held in my office, which you and your family attended, was definitely not meant merely to mollify you, or hold with the hopes that your concern over the tragic disappearance of your son would fade. Rather, the meeting was intended to provide you and your family with the chance to meet face-to-face with the officers here in Washington who are concerned over John's disappearance, and to give us a chance to understand, to the extent possible, the frustration and anxieties we know you must feel over John's disappearance, and the almost total lack of positive information to date.

Mr. John J. Sullivan, Jr.,
163 Summit Avenue,
Bogota, New Jersey 07603.

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DEPARTMENT OF STATE A/CDC/MR
REVIEWED BY [signature] DATE MAR 1 3 1984
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Regarding your comments on the "highly structured meeting," Mr. McCoy, as my Special Assistant, does meet with me frequently, and in fact normally attends many of the meetings at which I am present. Since he was unable to attend our meeting with you on February 18, I did brief him on our discussions later that day. There have been many meetings and discussions between my staff and I which have included as a topic your son's case. In fact, it is safe to say the John Sullivan case is a daily topic of discussion within the Department, as all of us involved attempt to identify ways in which we might learn more about the circumstances surrounding John's mysterious disappearance.

Policy decisions regarding John's case remain as they were at the time I spoke with you and your family. The Department is greatly concerned over John's disappearance, as we are over the welfare and whereabouts of any private American traveling or residing abroad. We continue to impress on the Salvadoran Government the U.S. Government's concern over the welfare and whereabouts of this American citizen, and the need for continuing investigation into his disappearance. I have also discussed John's case with officials such as former Ambassador Robert White and other concerned officials here in the Department. I assure you we are continuing to be open and honest with you regarding our efforts to assist the Salvadoran Government in their continuing investigation of John's disappearance.

Regarding the issue of Colonel Majano, we can identify no correlation, other than sheer coincidence, between the time of our meeting and the date of his arrest a few days later. Shortly after our meeting, we did ask the Embassy in El Salvador if they could arrange to see Col. Majano and ask him if he knew John Sullivan and, if so, what he knew. The Embassy responded that it would be extremely difficult, if not impossible, to see Col. Majano. Since he was a military prisoner and is not a U.S. citizen, the Embassy has no authority to formally request access to him. The Embassy also added they believed there was a good possibility that the Colonel would be leaving El Salvador in the near future and that a conversation with him once he had done so, and was no longer being held by Salvadoran authorities, would not only be easier to arrange but might perhaps leave him more willing to answer our questions.

As Mr. Martinez told your daughter on Monday, Colonel Majano was released late last week, and has reportedly left El Salvador. Unfortunately, we were not aware of this at the time Mr. Ward talked with you on Saturday. We have been trying to locate Col. Majano since then. His brother in New York states he does not know his exact present whereabouts, but he assured us that he will let us know as soon

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as he himself hears from Col. Majano and will be happy to assist us in arranging meetings, either between the Colonel and a representative from the Department or, if possible, between the Colonel and members of the Sullivan family.

As you know, we did try to check out the potential lead in the G. Bruce Nixon letter but without success. Vice Consul Luis Majano in New York told us that he had no sister in Mexico. When officials from our Embassy in El Salvador spoke with Mr. Nixon, he stated that what he had written was based strictly on hearsay, that he could not remember from where or from whom he had picked up this information, nor could he vouch for its reliability.

Finally, regarding your comments on a public statement, I want to assure you that this Department certainly does acknowledge John Sullivan's disappearance and considers it a serious and significant matter. Although I realize the tragedy involving the four American women brutally murdered in El Salvador has drawn the lion's share of attention in the media, I assure you this is not because we attach more significance to their deaths than we do to John's disappearance. It is simply a case of the media determining what questions are asked of us and what appears in print or over the wires. Incidentally, regarding the recent tragic kidnapping and murder of Mr. Chester Bitterman in Colombia, there was no official protest made to the Colombian Government, since it was obvious that the Colombian Government acted in a responsible manner in their unsuccessful efforts to locate and free Mr. Bitterman. Perhaps you are thinking of the official condolences which were transmitted to Mrs. Bitterman, who resided in Colombia at the time of Mr. Bitterman's kidnapping and murder.

In an effort to reassure you and the other members of the family of our continuing concern over John's disappearance, I have asked the Department spokesman to make certain that any statements made to the press which touch on the subject of Americans in El Salvador, particularly the specific topics of the murder of six Americans which have taken place there in recent months, also specify our continued concern for John Sullivan.

In closing, I want to again express to you the Department's concern, both personally and professionally, for John's disappearance and the terrible strain we know it places on you and all the members of the Sullivan family. I am well aware from my own experience how unnerving and disquieting it is to be forced into the spectator role, to be unable to take actions yourself, and concerned whether those capable of taking actions are doing so. I assure you none of us have forgotten John, nor do we intend to forget him,

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[illegible] the need to locate him, or at the very least unravel the mystery of his disappearance, remains paramount. I urge you to continue the open and free exchange of information and ideas between the Sullivan family and the State Department which I believe we established during our first meeting. I have instructed Mr. Ward and Mr. Martinez to continue daily contact with you and to, whenever possible, increase the flow of information concerning John's disappearance. Please feel free to call me as well if you believe I may be of some personal assistance.

Sincerely,

Diego C. Asencio

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